

**SPECIAL MEETING
CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2006
HUGH B. BAIN MIDDLE SCHOOL
135 GANSETT AVENUE
PUBLIC HEARING: 7:00 P.M.**

MNUTES

A public hearing on the proposed closing of the John W. Horton School was held on the evening of the above date at the Hugh B. Bain Middle School with the following members present: Mr. Archetto, Mrs. Greifer, Ms. Iannazzi, Mr. Lupino, Mr. Stycos and Mr. Traficante. Mr. Palumbo was absent due to illness. Also present were Mrs. Ciarlo, Mr. Scherza, Mr. Balducci, Mr. Votto, Mr. Laliberte, and Mr. Nero.

Mr. Lupino called the public hearing on the proposed closing of Horton School and its financial impact to order at 7:08 p.m.

The roll was called and the Pledge of Allegiance conducted.

Mr. Lupino noted that Mr. Palumbo was excused from this hearing because of illness. He had received a communication from Councilwoman Paula McFarland who was sorry she could not attend

because she had a class this evening. Senator Hanna Gallo also had another engagement.

Mr. Lupino stated that he was going to allow members of the administration to give the general public and the committee a background and explanation of the proposal, Fact Sheets Concerning the Proposed Closing of the John W. Horton Elementary School. A copy of these facts are located on the school department's website at www.cpsed.net.

He would then open the hearing for public comment.

Mrs. Ciarlo stated that the administration was going to attempt to take some questions from the last time they met with the committee that appeared to be confusing to the audience to see if they can clarify them this evening. She asked members of the administration to help with this explanation. She noted that there were four areas they were going to respond to. One is the cost analysis and personnel savings; the second is comparative data and class size and district spending; the third is the Horton Plan; and the fourth is the concept of future cost savings. She indicated that administration would begin with the cost analysis and personnel savings.

Mr. Balducci explained page 1 which is the budget savings. He noted that he believed there was some confusion and questions as far as the ultimate savings of the closing of Horton School. Some of the savings were directly related to the school itself, and some of the

savings were district wide. They attempted to split what they believed the savings

Page 2 February 9, 2006

to be for closing Horton directly and also some additional savings that will be achieved district wide with the movement of some personnel. That is what is on page 1. He entertained questions regarding this.

Mrs. Ciarlo stated that at the last meeting there were questions about if Horton were closed and the students were moved to Stadium School and Woodridge School, what would class sizes look like for next year based upon the information that they have now. Administration asked their data specialist to take the streets with the students in the grades they are in now, move them up a grade, and if they were proposed to go to Stadium what that impact would be, and if they were going to Woodridge, what impact it would have on Woodridge. That information is located on page 2 of the blue sheet. Mrs. Ciarlo asked Mr. Scherza and Mr. Laliberte to explain this information further.

Mr. Scherza referred to page 2, Comparative Data. He explained that the first section showed the current enrollments by grade at each of the three schools, Horton, Woodridge, and Stadium. The next segment, Projected Enrollments, Horton shows all zeroes because

under the plan there would be no students there. Woodridge and Stadium have numbers. In each of the little boxes are projected enrollments for Woodridge and Stadium. Three numbers are in each box. The first number is the total number of students in that grade. Inside the parentheses the first number will be number currently at that school. There is then a + sign and the second number inside the parentheses will be the students from Horton who would be going over to make up that total. The current number of classrooms is self-explanatory. When they looked at the Kindergartens, .5 means that there is either a morning Kindergarten or an afternoon Kindergarten, not a morning and afternoon Kindergarten. The fourth section is the projected classrooms which indicates what the actual class sizes would be. For example, in the Kindergarten where it indicates 1.0 that is a morning and an afternoon session. Under this plan, there will be a morning and afternoon session at both schools under this plan. At Woodridge, assuming the same population that is available now, there will be a section of 19 and one of 18; at Stadium there would be a morning and an afternoon Kindergarten tentatively broken down as 14 or 15. Most of the grades get lower or stay the same. He brought to their attention Grade 3 at Woodridge which would have two classes at cap. All the others would be significantly under the caps for what they have projected. Under District Spending Comparison, this is a compilation of the per pupil cost, the per pupil expenditures for these cities and towns for last year. These cities are in the Urban Ring and are identified by the Department of Education as communities that are most like Cranston in their makeup. They

include Warwick, West Warwick, North Providence, Cranston, and East Providence. One can see what each district spends per pupil. The state average last year was \$12,306. Last year Warwick spent \$12,694; West Warwick \$12,654; North Providence \$11,883; Cranston \$11,546 per student; and East Providence \$11,380. An average means that approximately half are above and half are below that figure. Mrs. Ciarlo asked the public to keep in mind that if this district got at least the state average of \$12,306, the district would have

Page 3 February 9, 2006

approximately \$5.5 million more to run the schools than they do now. So, Cranston is below the state average in expending for students.

Mrs. Ciarlo stated that the next topic had to do with people asking questions about the plans for Horton School. Under no circumstances is the School Committee of a mind, if it were to close, to turn the school back to the city. It belongs for the use of the schools until such time that the School Committee decides that they longer will use it. Administration has many uses for the Horton School. Mrs. Ciarlo asked Mr. Laliberte, who with others helped to develop the Horton Plan, to explain it. This plan is on page 3.

Mr. Laliberte stated that if Horton School were to close, the future plans would not necessarily happen the beginning of next year in September. As early as January next year, they will begin to look into

developing two integrated pre-schools at Horton where there would be five special needs students in the morning in a Kindergarten situation and ten general education students who would be with them. For the ten general education students, the parents would be paying for their children to give them that opportunity for a pre-school experience. They would also locate all of the special services personnel that are currently housed on Sprague Avenue at the Special Services Center at Horton School. On the first floor at Horton, they would house Michelle Simpson, who is Director of Early Childhood, putting her in close contact with both the integrated pre-schools and also it would plan the all-day Kindergarten starting with two all-day Kindertgartens for ESL youngsters. On the second floor, they would have the other special education directors. There are two other special education directors who take different sides of the city, and they would also have the program supervisors for speech and language. They would be housed there, and they would be able to provide service to the integrated pre-school and the Kindertgarteners as well as do pre-school testing. They would also have a census person there because they need to keep that operation all together and maintain all the files on those special education children. The census person would also be there keeping track of all the children in the special education programs. In the basement, they would have the central registration process when pre-school children are tested. While they are being tested, the parents could register their child so that it will be a relatively easy move for them. The Special Services Building, as a result of moving the entire operation

to Horton, would hold two classrooms similar to what they have right now at the Sanders School for the secondary programs. These are children they were not able to maintain at either the middle schools or the high schools. Typically, they would have put the twenty students at Sanders into an outside placement. The district has the same kind of youngsters at the elementary level. They would try to create two classrooms for children of this nature and put them at Special Services and pull them back from outside placements. They have found that this district can do as well with those children if they are given the right services for them. In the Special Services Building, they would also house the program supervisor for psychology, the occupational therapist and social worker who, instead of having their case loads in other buildings, they currently have smaller case loads

Page 4 February 9, 2006

because they are program supervisors, they would work with those children to bring them up to par, and hopefully they would be able to work those children back into the general population.

Mrs. Ciarlo asked everyone to keep in mind that when someone asks how long administration has been thinking about this, it is going back at least two years when the issue came up, first with the audit that came out from the city that the school department should close four elementary schools and they tried to delay that as much as possible. They finally had to close the Norwood Avenue School, and last year

in their plan they became very close to proposing Horton for last year. They were able to dodge that bullet for one year, and now they present themselves this year in a dilemma that they like the public would like to say that it has become a problem not only financially but also she asked everyone to look at program for the students. They would have opportunities, and yes the parents wouldn't walk them to school as they have done in the past. However, there would be more opportunities for those students to have choices in the grade placement as to where they are put which the parents don't have right now. It has become a situation where as much as administration doesn't want to do it, it is something that administration was told to prepare last year. They have been working for two years on this. Last year it was fairly serious, and this year it is very serious. Mrs. Ciarlo asked Mr. Votto to explain page 4, budget savings.

Mr. Votto stated that the committee and administration have come under criticism in the past for not showing the fiscal notes for the contracts over a three-year time period. He didn't think that everyone could look at the closing of Horton and the compacting of the itinerants in a vacuum. Everyone has to look at the future budget implications. It probably should be called budget savings in terms of what the expenses would have to be if Horton School was not closed this year. He is taking the additional year which is 2007-2008 which are the areas they would not fund in that particular budget year. They took a conservative approach on the benefits. Mr. Votto referred them to page 1 where the benefits are on a level playing field,

and it is a conservative approach. At this point, there are future budget implications when it comes to closing Horton. On this particular page, Horton is in one column; the district which is the itinerant savings is in another and then the total amount.

Mrs. Ciarlo indicated that this ended what they hoped would be the clarification for the public. As a result of this evening's hearing, she was sure further clarification would have to be done. She told the public that the administration and the committee were here to listen to them. She asked the public to tell them honestly and sincerely what their concerns were. She also told the public that because they were sitting here doesn't mean that they are not listening and not interested and that they don't care because they care deeply.

Page 5 February 9, 2006

Mr. Traficante referred to page 3 where it listed five special needs students in each class and ten general education students paying to attend each. He asked if these were Cranston residents. Mr. Laliberte responded that for the most part they would be Cranston residents. There is an integrated pre-school at Stone Hills School, and most of them come from Cranston. If they come from the outside, Cranston residents are given first choice. Mr. Traficante referred to the outside placements at the bottom of page 3. He asked, for the outside placements that would be brought back to the district, how much

would it cost the district for ten of those students to be out-sourced. Mr. Laliberte indicated that right now the range is between \$35,000 and \$50,000 a child depending on their degree of disability. For ten children, it would mean between \$350,000 and \$500,000 for bringing those children back. Mr. Lupino added that he would assume that this revenue source and that savings is not shown on page 4 because that would be an anticipated wash for the additional staff needed to integrate that program. Mr. Balducci said Mr. Lupino was correct.

Mr. Stycos referred to page 1, and indicated that 3.5 teachers are listed as being eliminated, but in the enrollment on page 2 it shows only two. He asked where the extra 1.5 teachers come from. Mr. Scherza responded that the extra 1.5 is a full-time reading specialist which is not listed as a classroom teacher and a ½ time resource teacher which is not listed along with class teachers. Mr. Stycos asked by eliminating those positions wouldn't it be less services for the children at Horton, Stadium, and Woodridge because right now there are 500 students with 3 reading specialists and 1.5 resource teachers between them. If this went through, there would still be 500 students but less staff. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that there would be some positions out of Title 1 that would add to it as well. Mr. Stycos added if they had this now with Horton, and Mrs.. Ciarlo said yes. Mr. Stycos said that there is a 1.5 teacher savings that cannot be attributed to closing Horton. They could make a policy decision if the committee wanted to have three schools covered by one fewer reading teacher and half fewer resource teacher and would end up

with the same services for the children as if they did it at the same time as closing. The teacher figure should have two there. Mrs. Ciarlo commented that administration said quite sometime ago that they would have at least one reading person full-time in every school.

They work a great deal in the classroom, so having additional students at Woodridge and Stadium would not create a burden to the reading consultant or the reading program. They fully anticipate that the Title 1 position that is presently part-time at Horton would probably go up to full time. It is a .4 position at Horton right now, and following the students it would go up to a 1.0 so Stadium would have a 1.0 city reading person and a 1.0, if the numbers were there, Title 1 person and would be adequately serviced. Mr. Stycos remarked that it would be a ½ savings on a resource teacher if ½ moved to Stadium.

Mrs. Ciarlo responded that the resource teacher is based on a 1 to 30 student ratio. Administration would have to make sure they had not exceeded the 30 student number. They are addressing resources in a different way now than they have in the past. They feel they can adequately service those students at Woodridge and Stadium. Mr. Stycos indicated to Mrs. Ciarlo that she felt the student could be adequately serviced, but that is not a savings if it comes from

Page 6 February 9, 2006

the closing of Horton. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that there would be one less reading person. Mr. Stycos said that there would be the same number of children being serviced by one fewer reading teacher.

That could be done now. Mrs. Ciarlo could say that this person will go 2/3 of the week to Woodridge and split up the time in different schools. The only savings are the two classroom teachers. Mrs. Ciarlo said that administration would not do that because they are committed to a full-time reading person in every school, so they believe that would be a savings.

Mr. Stycos referred to the first grade figures projected enrollments on page 2 and indicated that he believed that both the projected enrollments and the projected classrooms there will turn out to be low because the district generally picks up students from Kindergarten to first grade because parents want an all-day program for their kindergartens so they don't put their kids in the public school. When first grade comes around, they put them in grade 1 in the public school. There are approximately ninety students in all the grades between the three schools, but there are only sixty-seven Kindergartens. That sixty-seven will probably turn into eighty-five, and he asked if that happens would the plan be to add a fifth first grade or to add five students to each of the classroom numbers. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that since the classrooms are very favorably housed with the projected 19 and 18, 15 and 14 respectively, the elementary population as Mr. Stycos has stated in the past is going down. The likelihood of exceeding class cap is not that great. They can only go with past history and the data administration has on where they are now and where they would be to give a picture that a number of classrooms are not going to be overcrowded. Mr. Stycos

asked Mrs. Ciarlo if she agreed that people bring their first graders from private school Kindergarten. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that it tends to be those who are in parochial school for Kindergarten and then bring their students to public school for grade 1. Sometimes they have heard rumors as they are going around that the classes are going to be large, and they keep their students in parochial schools.

Councilwoman Cynthia Fogarty – She stated she was speaking in opposition to closing Horton. She missed Monday evening's meeting because of a Council meeting. Mrs. Fogarty referred to the fact sheet and asked if she understood correctly that the savings would now be approximately \$494,000 for closing Horton and not the \$771,000 that was being projected two weeks ago in a letter to her. In response, Mr. Scherza said that the savings is actually \$742,831 because by closing Horton it would allow administration to do a few other things with itinerants. Basically Horton would effect a savings of \$742,000 and not the \$494,000 Mrs. Fogarty referred to. Mrs. Fogarty asked Mr. Scherza if he was including the increases to expenses when these children are bused to Woodridge or Stadium. Mr. Scherza responded that they have costed out what it would be for busing, and they would not have to put a single additional bus or driver on as a result of this. They have looked into it and have costed it out. Mrs. Fogarty referred to the classroom sizes and when the classes go over cap. She asked

what the district needed to do when they were over cap. Mr. Scherza said that there a couple of options to choose from. When the class goes over cap by one, they can pay an overage which is a pro-rated amount. If they go over cap by a few students, it may force them to add another class section which means another teacher. A first step teacher with benefits costs in the vicinity of \$45,000 and a top step teacher costs approximately \$91,000, and it depends where in between it would be. Mr. Fogarty indicated that administration had not added those numbers in to the cost of the fact sheets this evening, and Mr. Scherza responded that they had not. Mrs. Fogarty said they don't know what the true cost is going to be based on going over cap sizes in classrooms. Mr. Scherza said that they did cost out what they have on the fact sheets. They have not created any over-cap classes except one of them. He did point out one class in his presentation at the beginning. That has not been anything that has come up. Mrs. Fogarty also remarked that a 40% savings on the building usage is showing for not using Horton, however, it sounded like administration plans on using the building for a great deal of other uses. She asked if those numbers should be factored back in as they increase the uses for Horton. Mr. Scherza said that that might be possible to a limited extent, but as Mr. Laliberte explained when he went through the tentative plan for Horton, administration would not be able to affect most of those saving in the first year. At the very best case scenario, they might be able to be up and running in

midyear which is January. That is the only reason it was put that way. Mrs. Fogarty noted that as they go out into further years, the savings will be less because the building will be used. Mr. Scherza responded that her statement wasn't quite correct because on the out years it would become a revenue center, and those activities would be subsidized. The number of ten students being brought in for a special needs program would be a savings per student of anywhere from \$35,000 to \$50,000 per year. Mrs. Fogarty commented that when Mr. Stycos was querying on that, the answer was that it would be netted out based on other costs they would have to incur. Mr. Scherza said that the whole concept is to bring students back, especially bring Cranston special needs students back to Cranston to take care of Cranston students in Cranston schools and also to spend a little bit of money to save a lot of money because it wouldn't cost the district \$50,000 per child. They would actually net out savings and actually in some instances generate revenue from outside sources in addition to what they would save. He felt it was the opposite from what Mrs. Fogarty suggested. She was basing it on the early comments made on those students. She asked how many elementary students were out-sourced, and Mr. Laliberte responded that there is a total of 94 students who are in outside placements. At least one-half or three-quarters of them are elementary students. Mrs. Fogarty referred to page 1 of the fact sheet and noted that on the document she received a couple of weeks ago the numbers varied on the savings for Horton. She asked if there was a reason for this, and Mr. Scherza responded that there was. One of the first things they

have done is go back to look at the seniority list district wide because teachers have a right to bump up on vacant positions, and they have a right to be retained on the basis of seniority. They have actually gone back and looked at what teachers are more apt to remain or not.

There are other pieces as well. Mr.

Page 8 February 9, 2006

Balducci noted to Mrs. Fogarty that the letter she received from his office was based on savings of a fifth step teacher. Some came in a little higher so they achieved a little more savings, but in some of the categories they were not eliminating a fifth step teacher but in some cases a third and fourth step teacher. The savings dwindled in that case. The blue document in front of her is trying to match as best they can based on the actual savings of personnel. Mrs. Fogarty added that it is showing an approximate \$50,000 difference, and Mr. Balducci said that she was correct. Mrs. Fogarty also said that there is an approximate \$40,000 savings in utilities at the school, and Mr. Balducci gave a whole plan for use of the basement, first floor and second floor. Mr. Balducci responded that as was mentioned before, it is the timing as to when it will take place. At a minimum, administration is hoping aggressively to start in January, so for the first half of the year the building will be somewhat vacant so they won't have to keep the lights on and won't have to heat the building. They are anticipating some savings there.

Mrs. Fogarty went on to say that a couple of weeks ago when she spoke before the committee, she suggested that once they realized that Horton was not in the budget last week based on page 191, she had asked in the prior week that if they truly felt it was necessary to close Horton, one of the things about the Cranston Public Schools that the committee has been professing for years to her as a City Council member is that the schools are so good because of the nature of its schools. When the nature of the schools is taken away, the public would see an effect of that, maybe not in the first or second year, but probably by the fourth year. Everyone will see the effect on not having the kinds of schools with the close parental involvement that is there for a school like Horton, that have the community involved like Horton, and as the scores start declining and administration can't figure out what is happening to Horton, stop and think back to this year when Horton was closed. She asked that if the committee has to close this school, an alternative program would be to do it by attrition. Do not have a Kindergarten at Horton this year if this is your final decision. Do not do a first grade. The Kindergarteners who went there have been there only a couple of hours per day for this year, so they could be placed in Woodridge or Stadium. Do the second, third, fourth and fifth grades and let those children finish out their year at the school they began at. They could factor in a savings each year over the next four years. As a worst case scenario, that is what she would hope the committee would at least consider as opposed to terminating the school at this school year.

Kimberly Petrarca, 15 Vale Avenue – She asked that the committee please not close her school because it teaches her a lot. The teachers are great, and she loves her school. Thank you very much.

Samantha Petrarca, 15 Vale Avenue – She stated that she attended John W. Horton School for six years, and she loved it. All the teachers she had were great. Her little sister, Kimberly, goes to Horton. Please don't close Horton. Thank you very much.

Page 9 February 9, 2006

Armando Mollicone, 10 Cedar Street – He stated that he is a student at John W. Horton Elementary School. I am here to ask you not to close my school. Maybe to you it's another school; to me it is my life.

Generations of my family have attended Horton. Now myself, my brother and soon my little brother. This is our childhood and our dreams. We, the children, are the future. Please don't take Horton away from us. Thank you.

Isaiah Tavares, 11 Cedar Street – I think you should not close Horton because I have been at Horton for five years. Also, my brother, Zeke, just started at Horton. Also, I have three cousins plus my grandma went to Horton. So I am asking you to not close Horton. It's our family.

Zeke Tavares, 11 Cedar Street – This school is a family. Please don't close it. Thank you.

Angie Salvato – I am a 1987 Horton Elementary School graduate. My daughter is in 2nd grade and is the fifth generation from our family as is my nephews in Kindergarten, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th. Most of them have attended other schools in the area including Stadium. We all seem to end up back at Horton because why, it's just a better school. We moved to better our children's education so I ask you to think long and hard on what you are doing and what you are taking away from the children at Horton. You say you are going to save all this money, but we are all confused by this statement. When we are in school we are always taught to put your pros and cons on a list. On one side you have Stadium gets its Title 1 name back, and on the other side you have spending more money on buses, because, yes, we are not in the district so they have to bused in and out. More computers for each school because you are doubling the load; more desks and lunch tables because you are using ours and paying the people to move them. Or, instead of busing you can redistrict the areas and tic off everyone in Cranston. Then there is hiring new teachers for these schools because you are not supposed to go over 25 children. Then, as you know, we have special needs students who need their aides so you'll have to hire them. Then there are the co-pays for the psychiatrists for some of the children, and the reason we can get that is because you are trying to close us without a legitimate reason. We

have full classrooms and a full Kindergarten for 06-07. We are a high achieving school. We turn out one-half of Bain's honor roll system. We turn out all-around good kids. In closing, I would like to say that not only will you not close us down but you might give us a playground.

Andre Araujo, 20 Stevens Road – He stated that his daughter, Emma, attends Horton. He read his statement as follows: Why did you want to be on the School Committee?

Page 10 February 9, 2006

Cranston's first responsibility is public education. Two hundred years ago people just needed an elementary education because people worked on a farm. One hundred years ago you needed just a high school education because people worked in a factory. Today all these kids need a college education; it is required in this post-industrial globalized world. College is no longer just an option for the wealthy elite but a must for all American citizens. America's survival depends on having a college educated public. Before students even enter high school, they must have the attitude and aptitude for college. The path to college starts at the elementary

school level. Research proves that smaller schools are better and safer. Small elementary schools like Horton provide social stability, interpersonal relationships, sense of community, and involvement from parents. Parent involvement is required when it comes to a child's educational development and achievement. Parents are more likely to know the principal and teachers like they do at Horton, be informed about their children's progress, participate more fully in the school's activities like they do at Horton, and influence decision making of both the teachers and the students like they do at Horton. This can occur partly because the school is smaller, but also because it is likely to be physically and psychologically close to student's homes. Community socialization and academic education occurs with the cooperation of parents, teachers, community and extended family. Bussing kids to another distant larger school disconnects and alienates the home community from the school environment. Cranston and America should be in the business of establishing more and smaller community based elementary schools, not shutting them down. We should not have soldiers dying in Iraq to open schools there only to have you close them here at home. Concerned parents will leave and avoid moving to Cranston for better educational opportunities in other communities in the state. Insightful parents will not be slaves to the tyranny of short-sighted politicians caring only about the next election and personal power. Cranston will lose and surely fall into decline and may never recover from this. This might be the beginning of the end of Cranston. For Cranston's future, America's future and our kids' futures, small community based

schools like Horton must remain open. I have a fear that you have already decided on Horton's fate, and this is all just theater. Please prove us wrong. Thank you.

Mark Lucas, 28 Riverfarm Road – He stated that his son, Ryan, is a first grader at Horton Elementary, and that is the reason he is here and has been here a couple of times talking about the potential closing of the school. He stated that he was listening to Mr. Scherza talk about class size. The thing that struck him was that it sounds like a miscalculation of just two or three kids could result in having administration add a new section or adding another teacher. That is an awfully small margin of error. He further commented that Mr. Scherza is a professional educator, and this is his job. All he knows is that he has been seeing many parents, families, new families, moving into just his little neighborhood, Forest Hills. They have two, three, or four kids. It just seems that this margin of error has got to be wiped when they begin looking at the kids they don't know are there or the kids coming down the road because they are attracted to

Page 11 February 9, 2006

this school system. On one hand, they make a great school system, want to bring people in who are attracted to it, and on the other hand, they are closing down a neighborhood school. He is have trouble balancing that in his mind. Secondly, Superintendent Ciarlo brought up the concept of the audit and how it talked about the four

elementary schools that were recommended. He stated that he read the entire audit, and right after the audit group mentioned closing four elementary schools to save money, it talked about the commitment that this School Committee and school department have made to a neighborhood school system. It also said that the last thing on the list should be closing the neighborhood school system. They should look at all avenues, all other revenue savings devices that they can, and the absolute last thing has to be, if it has to be, should be closing a school. The last time he was in front of the committee he did a cursory review and found some things the committee and administration should explore to try to save money. He picked out eight things, and after a quick review, the savings could be almost \$2 million. The committee needs to look at those things first. They need to honor their commitment to the kids. Don't go right for the juggler by closing Horton. The committee is looking for an extra \$10 million to keep this system going so they are closing Horton School. Next year he knows it will be about \$9 million and asked what would happen then. He asked if the committee would target another elementary school and close that one. The year after that it will be another roughly \$9 million, and maybe there will be another elementary schools. In three years, three elementary schools. He asked who was decimating the school system. He said that he didn't have prepared remarks; he was speaking from the heart. He implored the committee to really take their time, look at the big picture, but keep Horton open.

Gail DeRobbio, 22 Spenstone Road – She stated that she was coming before the School Committee and administration this evening to express her concerns with the administration's proposal to close the John W. Horton School. She came here as a parent, a taxpayer, and first and foremost as a teacher. Her relationship with the Cranston School Department, correct her if she was wrong, goes back at least eight years. If her mind served her well, her twins were entering the first grade at Gladstone. It was back then that she marched on City Hall advocating for adequate funding for the Cranston schools. Yes, she does realize that communities have grown reliant upon property taxes to fund education, but her arguments still hold true today, as it did eight years ago, and that why doesn't the state fund education as stated in the Rhode Island General Laws, Chapter 16-69. It states that funding for education should be 60-40 state to local funding. Now remember back eight years ago her argument was that the schools were being funded approximately 33%, and it has progressively decreased over the years instead of progressed. Also, the General Assembly specifically states in Chapter 16-79-1 that there is a need for a plan that reduces reliance on the property tax; also distribute state education aid in a manner which considers student needs and local property tax burdens which is calculated on a forward funded appropriation basis; also, provides a predictable amount and source of funding for education programs;

also recognizes the state's ability to support education and is consistent with the Rhode Island Supreme Court ruling. So, yes, she does agree that as a community they need to assemble as a group to call upon the legislators to act upon the law. Cranston has gone too long under funded, and because of this, the increases appear insurmountable; but Cranston still continues to educate the children in high performing schools and makes do with what they have. Secondly, she purchased a home in the Horton community because of the close proximity to the schools. She does not wish for her property value to decrease. It also makes it quite convenient going to work since she is the fourth grade teacher at Horton. In fact, at a recent parent conference that was communicated to her by this parent, that if it is true that Horton does close, he will begin looking to move. Horton does so many things that exceed expectations. There are only three inclusive schools in Cranston, one of which is Horton. The staff and Mrs. Casale are dedicated professionals that are relentless in providing the best learning experiences for the children. Speaking for herself, she is usually in her classroom between 7:00 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. every morning, and she can be found there until late in the afternoon. Yes, she likes to be prepared, but it is really because she loves her job. In closing, it is not because she is a teacher at Horton because she can teach anywhere; it is because Horton is unique and the children flourish there. The strong sense of community is like the worker bees and their queen. She has not seen this in large populated schools. By closing, the committee would be relinquishing the historical significance that has been the foundation

of Horton. They would be threatening the property values of homes in their community, and ending a successful inclusive program and separating the warm and nurturing community that Horton has a known history of being.

Mrs. DeRobbio asked that the following letter be included in the minutes of this meeting. She stated that the school received a letter from Jennifer Horton which reads as follows:

Dear Cranston City Council and School Department, I was surprised and saddened to hear that the future of John Wesley Horton Elementary is up for discussion today. My great-grandfather was the late John Wesley Horton of Cranston, Rhode Island. Just this past Thanksgiving, I had the pleasure of meeting many of you when I stopped by to visit the school and was asked to speak to the students to bring a page of history to life as to the “Horton” namesake. I was struck by the warm and caring presence of the faculty and the inviting feeling of the classrooms and recreational areas, not to mention all the happy smiling faces filling the cafeteria. It seems like a great environment for your students and an important fixture in the surrounding neighborhood and community. On behalf of the faculty, parents and students, I would like to bring some attention to the historical significance of Horton Elementary to the history of the City of Cranston. John W. Horton was the second mayor of Cranston, Rhode Island serving from 1914-1922. Part of his platform and his personal agenda was the importance of education in the early years and building new schools. This elementary school was built during

his last years in office, but Horton suffered a heart attack and died during his term. Upon the school's completion soon after, the city and the school board voted to dedicate the

Page 13 February 9, 2006

school in his honor, recognizing his support and passion for education. Mayor Horton's only child, Roger Fales Horton, grew up in Cranston and attended his neighborhood elementary school and Cranston High where he was a strong student. He excelled in working in the family business, while his two children George "Mack" MacDonald Horton and John "Jack" Wesley Horton, my father, grew up nearby in Edgewood. They too attended local elementary schools and Cranston High, where "Mack" later returned as a beloved English teacher and hockey coach for many years. Mack's children and currently his Horton grandchildren also attended Cranston schools. Jack Horton went on to attend Brown University in the heart of Providence earning a B.S. in Physics and then earned his PhD in Nuclear Physics at Princeton University. Later he did graduate work at MIT as well as 2 years at Harvard Medical School for research purposes before working in Research and Development for IBM for 27 years where he made great advancements in medical technology and holds numerous US patents. Three generations later, I hold the same beliefs about the value of education at all levels. As a family value, its importance was instilled in me even before Kindergarten. I studied Chemical Engineering at Columbia University in New York and was

part of a research group my senior year at the Columbia Genome Center to sequence the Human Genome in 2002. While city governments and school boards tend toward consolidation and centralization in order to maximize resources for schools and students, what is many times unquantifiable and, therefore, lost in the equation is the personal and community significance of a long-standing local school. Generations of families have attended Horton Elementary, and it has remained a school that feels like “home” to many in our increasingly homogenous and scattered society. Attending a historical school with a neighborhood student population offers an opportunity to strengthen a child’s ties to the community where he or she lives. Before viewing Horton Elementary as another line item on the budget, please take into consideration that schools, especially neighborhood elementary schools, offer a uniquely nurturing environment where children start to see the possibilities for the future and learn that they as individuals can make a difference, each in their own way. Sincerely, Jennifer Rice Horton.

Steve Drager, 15 Bank Street, Former School Committee Member for Ward 3 – He stated that he wished to ask questions on the Fact Sheet.

Mr. Drager referred to page 2 where the class sizes are listed. He stated that all the classes were close to maximum, and asked whether or not administration had looked at the other schools in the district to determine how many of them have maximum class sizes. Mr. Scherza responded that administration has looked at every single classroom district wide, especially at the elementary level not only the existing

classrooms but also the projected classrooms, and there is room in every single school. Mr. Drager asked how many classes would be at maximum, and Mr. Scherza responded that for this current year there are 12 at cap, and that is out of 134 elementary classrooms. Mr. Drager brought to the attention of the committee and administration some information that was developed back in 2004. There was a resolution passed in 2004 that required the School Committee to set up a

Page 14 February 9, 2006

sub-committee for the purposes of initiation and subsequent closing of a school. The committee was asked to develop a policy utilizing the latest planning, population data, classroom densities, regional impacts, economic strategies, and redistricting if necessary prior to implementation of a procedure of closing a school. Furthermore, the procedures for closing a school would allow a period of time for public comment and hopefully it would be more than this. If upon final determination by the committee, the result is the closing of a school, no school shall be closed prior to the date of final determination. He asked if there is a sub-committee who has put together a policy or anything of that nature regarding the closing of a school. Mrs. Ciarlo said there was none that she knew of. Mr. Lupino said he was on the School Committee then, and that committee never met. He told Mr. Drager that he was appointed the Chairman of that sub-committee. Mr. Drager responded that, unfortunately, the

election came about and he wasn't able to do that. He mentioned further that for several years Horton has been targeted for closing, and they have always come up with alternatives to closing Horton. There have been times when they didn't have money for a principal, and they found alternatives and found a principal. Mrs. Casale is doing a great job. They talk about neighborhood schools, and this is a high performing school. High performing Blue Ribbon Schools shouldn't be closed. The community needs to put faith in the neighborhood schools that the School Committee, the administration, the city, and the council will fund the school system so that there won't be issues such as this. He was sure there was a surplus in the city budget. He implored the administration and the committee to go the city to negotiate now to get extra money for the schools. He remembers back in 2004 the same issue occurred, and after the budget was presented, they received an extra \$1 million from the city.

It was a great help in preventing any closures or whatever the schools were looking at. Please find an alternative to closing Horton. They deserve and have worked so hard to produce what they have. The children, parents, and the community work together. They want to continue that throughout all the communities.

Mrs. Gail DeRobbio, 4th grade teacher at Horton School, showed a Power Point presentation of the Horton School community environment.

Susan Adler, Horton School Parent – She stated that she was listing

her address as John W. Horton Elementary School. She said she is the proud mother of Shoshana. She is in Mrs. K and Mrs. Z's class. Her son, Joshua, who spoke two weeks ago, graduated last year from Horton, and this year is a student at Bain.

Mrs. Adler read a statement as follows: It really hit home for me on Tuesday why we are fighting to save John W. Horton while watching the funeral of the late great Corretta Scott King. We have lost over these last few months two great civil rights leaders, Mrs. King and Rosa Parks. These two women, along with the likes of many others, had the guts to stand up for what they believe in without fearing the outcome. They stood the test of time. When Rosa Parks was asked to reflect on her heroic act of her refusal to

Page 15 February 9, 2006

give up her seat on a bus to a white man, Ms. Parks said the following: They'd probably shut the door, drive off and leave you standing there. We will not be left standing there because our doors of Horton will not and should not be shut. As you look out into this auditorium, what you see before you are future civil right activists, doctors, social workers, educators, parents and just some really good souls. What you really see and have heard is the hope of parents and from future generations. It is a heavy burden that you all face tonight while you go back and discuss our request to keep us open. It is a struggle for all of us as we stand before you tonight requesting that

you all make the right decision with our children, the history of Horton and with the hope for the future. Struggle is a never-ending process; freedom is never really won, you earn it and win it in every generation. Those are the words of Corretta Scott King. This generation here tonight and those at home doing homework deserve to win it. The “it” is John W. Horton and the education they have been getting from our amazing teachers. Our greatest abilities are the students at John W. Horton. You cannot take away our hopes and dreams of our students. Remember, ask not what John W. Horton can do for you, ask what you can do for John W. Horton and that is to keep it open. I have never been prouder to be a part of a group as I am as a parent of John W. Horton School. From the first day my son stepped into Kindergarten and Shashana, I have met my best friends, and I am proud to say they are here tonight. Our students and teachers are creative, caring, accepting, and inspiring. They have not created this budget problem or shall I say crisis. Why do the students have to pay the price of this manmade problem and concern themselves every budget go-around with the threat of Horton closing? Kids today have enough pressures from society to deal with. There is no reason why that they have to have this pressure on them wondering if a place they have called home, John W. Horton, is staying open or closed. To us it is a closed deal; keep us open. It is amazing to walk into our school, and to witness the enthusiasm of our students and teachers. They really all want to be there. We are now at this crossroads with you as our school committee making the right decision. As John F. Kennedy said, “Our problems are

manmade, therefore, they may be solved. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings.” Please listen to his words; you have the destiny of our students in your hands. Extend that hand to all of us with a promise of a handshake and with making the right decision, and for some of you we understand it is a difficult decision; but please keep us open. I will end with the words of JFK. Please listen to them and take them to heart when you make your decision about Horton. “For in the final analysis our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small plant; we all breathe the same air; we all cherish our children’s future, and we are all mortal.”

Emma Arrujo, 20 Stevens Road – She stated that she is in first grade at Horton. I walk to Horton, and I love Horton. Do not close Horton. Thank you.

Laurie Stadelbauer, 39 Orlando Avenue – She stated that she had some questions regarding the Fact Sheet. She asked who was going to fund Horton School when they bring in all the students in the new program that will be brought into the building. Mr.

Page 16 February 9, 2006

Laliberte said they are already funded. Mrs. Stadelbauer commented that the money is still going to be there. She expressed her concern about the non-Cranston residents and asked how the committee could justify closing Horton and bringing in non-Cranston residents.

Mr. Lupino commented that they are talking about bringing back students from out of district. Mrs. Stadelbauer responded that Mr. Laliberte said that some of them would be non-Cranston residents. Mr. Laliberte indicated that this parent is referring to the integrated pre-school, and that would be after all the people from Cranston who have shown an interest in the integrated pre-school then they would consider people who are willing to pay for the pre-school who live outside the city of Cranston. Mrs. Stadelbauer asked how much was funded for the new plans for Horton School and what were they being given to keep it running. The administration is saving \$800,000 but they are telling the parents that they will be putting in so much to keep it going. Mr. Laliberte said the plan is to move Special Services over to Horton over the next few years, and they would save between \$85,000 to \$235,000; and that is with the hiring of the teachers for the Kindergartens they would open, the integrated pre-schools, and the special needs classes. Mrs. Stadelbauer asked what they would do when that enrollment starts going down, and they have to close it again. Mrs. Stadelbauer commented that she was in Horton School the beginning of the school year, and there were about six children who had just moved into the neighborhood who were turned away from the school because it was full. When those six kids come back because they want to go to Woodridge or Stadium, more kids are being added who are in the district, but they have to be weaned out from where they are and put where they belong. She asked if administration looked into this matter and if they looked into when people buy houses, administration doesn't know who will buy the

house and how many will move into that house. She asked how they could say that there won't be overcrowding at Woodridge or Stadium when they can't predict that. Mr. Scherza responded that people move in and people move out in all of the neighborhoods. That is one of the things administration constantly faces. Enrollment district wide changes daily. It changes weekly by large numbers. With regard to the first part of her question, Mr. Scherza said that students who live in the Horton district and may be elsewhere, whether it be permit or whatever, those are calculated in this report. Mrs. Stadelbauer asked Mr. Scherza what he plans to do next year if Horton is closed and the parents are standing here telling him that the classes at Stadium and Woodridge are overcrowded. She asked what the next step would be. Mr. Scherza said this is something they face with every classroom. They would bring it up to cap and would have to distribute. Possibly they would have to take teachers from other areas to open more classes. It depends on how much and how the population falls out. It is possible to open more classes; it is possible that they would have to do the same in other schools. Mrs. Stadelbauer commented that if they left Horton open, they could forget about this other problem. \$800,000 sounds like a lot of money, but for these kids, it is really not. Her son is in the fourth grade, and this is the third time she is fighting to keep this school open. That is sad, and it is discouraging. The sad part is that they lose teachers because of it. She asked Mr. Scherza if he would stay in a job where he knows he isn't stable; she didn't think so.

She didn't blame the teachers if they wanted to look elsewhere. This is their career. If administration keeps holding this over their heads every year, no one will want to work there. They do such a remarkable job in their classrooms. It takes them weeks to set them up. She asked if it was fair that they have to pack them up and move. Horton is a good school with a lot of good students. It is a high performing school. She asked what justification administration has outside of money to close that school. It doesn't make sense that they can close a school because they don't have the \$800,000. It is not a good enough reason for her. If it had low enrollment and wasn't doing good, then that would be a reason to close the school; but they are not. They have a full Kindergarten coming in. Their classes are practically full, and it is a high performing school. She doesn't understand why Horton gets it every year. She asked if administration already has this plan ready to go. She asked if the parents were wasting their time, and if this plan was already in stone. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that administration was asked to do this, and in no way is it a feta complis. She told Mrs. Stadelbauer that the parents wanted answers, and if enough answers aren't given, then people will say there are no plans. Now that they have the plans, the School Committee could decide not to close Horton, then those plans go on the back burner; and they don't come to be. Mrs. Stadelbauer stated that as a parent she is completely stressed about this; it is the third year. Her son goes to Bain, and he can't go back to his

elementary school and visit his old teachers because they are not there. The last time there was a threat to close the school, they went to a school that is solid and one that doesn't get picked on for closure. It is not fair to these students. She went to Stadium, and she still remembers every single elementary school teacher in that school. The students need stability and need these teachers there when they come in to school. Horton has an awesome staff right now, and she would hate to lose that staff. There are great teachers, and the kids love them. The thought of losing one or two of them is a big deal to a kid. The kids should be able to go to the school where she chose to live. She moved there because of the school, and now she is being told that she has to ship her child elsewhere. She doesn't want to. Woodridge is a fantastic school, but it is not what she wants for her child. She wanted a small neighborhood school, and that is why she moved three houses down from the school. She hoped the committee thinks about the long run. She hoped the district would save \$800,000, but there are 132 lives that will be affected by this if they don't save that money.

Steven Ferrazzano, 34 Maple Street – Steven read the following statement: This is my first year at Horton. I am in second grade. My first day of school was scary, but the kids and teachers were very nice to me. Soon I had a lot of friends. I don't want to go to a new school again so please don't close my school. Thank you.

Amanda Caldarone, 27 Stevens Road – Amanda read the following

statement: I went to Horton for five years and graduated just last year. Through the years, I have learned a lot. I continued to do well and have made honor roll. It is an awesome school, and I enjoyed going there. I would never regret getting up in the morning to go to school. I

Page 18 February 9, 2006

had a wonderful time at Horton, and I would like my sisters, Brittany, who is in second grade, and also my sister, Alyssa, who is coming to Kindergarten next year, to follow in my footsteps and be able to have the same great experience I did. So, please don't close Horton. Thank you.

Virginia McCormick, 20 Lockmere Road – She stated that she is the acting publicist for this school, so it is fair that she get up and say her piece even though she is usually representing people who do this. Ms. McCormick read the following statement: In preparing this evening, I read over the superintendent's cover letter to this budget proposal and wanted to highlight a couple of things that I thought were interesting. It said this budget is reasonable, responsible, and student orientated, and as such will enable us to continue to improve student achievement, Kindergarten through Grade 12. It also says that we will strive to utilize resources in this budget to improve student achievement for all of our students. It says that it's still about kids reaching high standards. While our contract negotiations

resulted in employee contracts that are in line with surrounding communities, they nevertheless added to the proposed budgets' bottom line. It also said that it is still about kids reaching high standards. A lot of this I prepared was kind of answered with this blue sheet we were given tonight. I am not a math whiz, so I am still kind of confused. For sentimental reasons aside, I am the class of 76 from Horton. Horton's reputation and student achievement was one of the deciding factors for us to move here in the first place. Not only do we lose a neighborhood school but our property values are going to suffer. The school administration's budget will produce larger class sizes and fewer high level courses. With those obstacles, how are the children suppose to reach high standards. Originally the administration proposed closing Horton to save, first they said \$800,000, then somebody said \$791,000, and now we are looking at \$400,000; and I am the first to admit that despite running my own business I am a little math challenged, but that is quite a difference. These numbers are, as they say in her family, "make-a-believe." She wants to understand this because I have a second grader to answer to tonight. She is still confused about the itinerant teachers' issue. The original estimate also was talking about 3-1/2 positions and two positions were going to be saved. I am really at a loss. Is this all about getting Stadium Title 1 status or squeezing kids to the next school until we get Orchard Farms up to capacity? I know that you said that bus costs were kind of factored in, but gas prices are really high. In your plan, as Mrs. DeRobbio and Mrs. Fogarty said, that 40% savings of utilities, if the school is still being used, I don't see how

you could save 40% there. Time is money, and there's plenty being wasted every two years with this issue...time that could actually be better served benefiting our children, remember them, in their existing school, organizing fund raisers as we always do so successfully, to widen the cultural horizons of these kids with field trips to the Philharmonic and social events such as Rock 'n Bowl. The word compacting was used frequently at the last meeting and that means increasing class size. How is that student oriented when we heard parents from other schools complaining that their kids in large classrooms are overwhelmed and lost. And speaking of student oriented, can you tell

Page 19 February 9, 2006

me what percentage of this budget, with what I feel are unreasonable employee pay raises, is actually for the children? What is their bottom line? Please reconsider.

Carly Rotenberg, 1196 Park Avenue, 4th Grade Student at Horton School – Carly read the following statement: I strongly feel that Horton Elementary should stay open. There are numerous things I can think of to persuade you into not closing down Horton. One is that we have amazing teachers and a spectacular principal. Another thing is that everyone in my school will be separated. Some kids have been here since Kindergarten and probably want to finish their final year at Horton. Also, it's not fair for the families who went to

Horton and now want their children to go to Horton. Secondly, it's a small school and everybody knows each other, so we are all good friends. Plus you shouldn't close our school when I only have one year left. We are like a community because everyone gets along and cares about each other. Kids support their classmates, and in larger schools kids don't know everyone in the school. Like I said, this school is flowing with great teachers. They make learning fun and have concern for the students. Also, they make sure kids get the right information. Most importantly, why do you have to close our school? It will just make other classes bigger! Everything at Horton is about the students and this school is an inclusive school that includes everybody. Horton is also a polite, honest, and responsible school. Also, I really don't want to have to go to two new schools, one for fifth grade and another for middle school. Plus, I would have to graduate at a school I've only been at for one year. In conclusion, I hope you don't close down Horton so other kids can go to a wonderful school such as Horton!

Rita Marcotte, 43 Freedom Drive – She stated that she is from Woodridge School. She didn't mean to rub salt in the wound for the Horton parents, but she was doing a what if scenario. There are several 2nd and 3rd grade parents here from Woodridge, and they were adding some numbers. She referred to page 2 of the fact sheets and noted that for next year's third grade there are 57 students, 41 from Woodridge and 16 coming over from Horton. Under projected classroom, that adds up to 51 students. She asked if the other six

students were being clustered out. On Monday, there were three classrooms, and today there are two. Mr. Scherza responded that the other students are permitted students and do not live in either of the districts who are from the outside the Horton and Woodridge districts. Mrs. Marcotte indicated to Mr. Scherza that he had projected enrollment of 57 and asked if there were six permitted students between the two schools. He did not know the exact number, but could find out the exact number. Mrs. Marcotte said that if this does happen the school needs another portable so that there are places for their resource and reading teachers to be. A portable is better than a closet. Her son is in fifth grade, and thankfully he doesn't need those resources, but for the people that do, it is much better than being in a closet.

Ed Angele, 28 Richland Road – He stated that the committee heard him two weeks ago talk about Logan. He is looking at the teachers in the back, and he doesn't see any

Page 20 February 9, 2006

half teachers. He knows that Mrs. Cole is pretty short, but she is not half a person. He heard Mrs. Ciarlo say a few years ago they had to close four elementary schools. Logan was lucky enough to attend Norwood which is now closed. He is attending Horton which will possibly be closed. He hopes he doesn't go to Woodridge because in two years Woodridge will be closed. He doesn't know what anyone

has against his son; he is a great kid. Please keep his schools open. He heard Mr. Scherza say that the twelve classrooms that are at cap now out of 134 in elementary, that is close to 10%. More kids are being put in the schools; they are not doing the math right – there are 57 but it is adding up to 51. A parent is asking for a portable, and he asked how much a portable cost. In response, Mr. Scherza said that the cost of moving one of the existing portables the district has is about \$110,000 according to Mr. Zisseron. To purchase a new one, to do the site work, and to move it in the purchase price would be roughly \$200,000 to \$220,000 each. Mr. Nero indicated that Western Hills has seven portables. Mr. Scherza added that there may be another five or six in the district in addition to those. Mr. Angele mentioned that two weeks ago the parents heard about the construction at Cranston East, and they are talking about putting portables there. A few weeks ago at a meeting, the Western Hills students were complaining about the buses being late. Now the demand for the buses for the elementary schools has been increased. He asked if the buses are already late for the middle schools did it mean they would be that much later for the elementary schools. Mrs. Greifer lives in his neighborhood, and about a year ago he was at a meeting with her trying to save the neighborhood from the bank. She knows what those streets are like. He asked how those buses could get down the streets to pick up these kids. He asked if the kids would be picked up at their houses or if they would walk to one central point. The parents wouldn't want the children crossing Park Avenue at that time of the morning. He felt that if the district got rid of some

portables, kept some good schools open, they could get down to saving money.

Jeffrey Barone, Councilman Ward 6 – Mr. Barone referred to the fact sheets. He referred to page 1 and the budget savings. He noted that \$88,000 was listed for the principal's salary, and he was assuming that it was not a first year principal. If that principal is a Horton principal and is going to bid up to another school, she would replace a principal that does not have as much seniority and, therefore, doesn't make as much money. That \$88,000 savings is a little inaccurate because that \$88,000 principal would still have her job, and he or she would replace a \$50,000 principal. In response, Mrs. Ciarlo remarked that this was not necessarily true because it might not work out that way. Mr. Scherza indicated that the salary that appears is near the bottom of the scale. The position is at third step right now. As far as the principals moving around, it would be low 70's high 80's and moving up from there. Mr. Barone noted that the principal at Horton on the budget proposal there was a total salary of \$117,000. Mr. Scherza said that it included all fringe benefits. Mr. Barone said that that principal would keep that pay scale and probably would replace a principal that doesn't make that much because of the seniority, so he would think the \$88,000 is an inaccurate figure.

Mrs. Ciarlo commented that the principal there does not have as many years being a principal so she wouldn't be that high on the step scale. The likelihood that she would replace someone who is making less than she would be little or nothing. It probably would not happen because it is only on the third step. Mr. Barone asked if a third year teacher with benefits makes \$117,000, and Mrs. Ciarlo said he was correct. Mr. Barone stated that maybe this should be reconsidered before thinking about closing a school. People are one of the greatest assets that this city has, but look at the dilemma everyone has right now. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that it would be nice if the district was at least funded at the per pupil expenditure for the state. Mr. Barone said he didn't see any of the state representatives telling everyone tonight that they are going to work like they promised they would work to see to it that the school department will get the state funding that they do. He didn't see any of Cranston's state legislators here at this meeting. They can send all the letters they want, but the parents and teachers should realize where these state legislators' priorities lay. Mrs. Ciarlo mentioned that if the district were to get that aid they would have \$5.5 million, and they wouldn't be talking about closing Horton; they would be talking about reducing class size; putting literacy aides back in the classroom, and all the things they should be doing. Mr. Barone indicated that he is on the City Council, and Mrs. Ciarlo and the School Committee will be coming in front of him. Maybe he and others on the Council should go to the State House and do what their legislators are supposed to be doing. They don't want to do it because they aren't here tonight. Mrs. Ciarlo

stated that the school department would be happy to go with them. Mr. Barone referred to page 2 and noted that someone asked the question about the addition for Cranston East, the projected enrollments, and the projected number of classrooms. If they are still not showing the six students, they still have to teach these students. If they were to add those six students, it would be 44 and 19, and he asked if they would need another classroom. Mr. Scherza said that the extra classroom would be needed only if they were in this district.

Otherwise, they would go to school where there is space in the district where they live. Mr. Bruno responded to Mr. Scherza that apparently he was assuming they are in the district because they are going to Woodridge. He felt they would need another classroom which would mean they would need another teacher. Mr. Lupino commented that permitted students live outside of that district. Because there is room and because there are extenuating circumstances that they present to the Superintendent, they are allowed a permit. The permit is only for one year, and if there is no room, those students have to return to their home school. Mr. Barone asked if there was no room based on this report. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that they are not counting them in the population between Woodridge and Stadium for next year. Mr. Barone indicated that the savings on Monday night went from \$798,000 to \$742,000 so administration must have found some more money, which is good. He commented that a lot of the discussion tonight was geared toward surrounding communities and ring communities, etc. He felt that the most important city was Cranston, and he didn't think that the

administration and committee shouldn't be worrying about Warwick and West Warwick. Mrs. Ciarlo interjected that she wants to be as good as they are. Mr. Barone said that

Page 22 February 9, 2006

Cranston is better, and Mrs. Ciarlo responded that they won't remain that way if they are not adequately funded. Mr. Barone said that Cranston has always won awards and has always been \$5 million to \$10 million short on their budget. Mr. Lupino commented that Cranston is not a poor district. He asked if Cranston with the success that it has if it was fair that it has to operate with \$1,000 less per student. Mr. Barone answered that they need to be rewarded. Mr. Lupino said that he was not saying this to attach that money, but Cranston has upwards of a \$24 million chunk of change sitting out there somewhere. That came from the taxpayers. Mr. Barone responded that the \$24 million did not come from the taxpayers; \$20 million did and approximately \$4 million is grant money that was put one side and cannot be touched. Mr. Lupino stated that if the district had the funding it should have from the state, and they always compare us to other states, and the committee and administration compare themselves to other districts, they are looking for only equity. If that happened, this discussion would not be happening, and Horton would be open next year. Mr. Barone asked what other measures this School Committee and school department have taken to save the \$800,000 that they want to save before deciding to close

Horton School. In response, Mrs. Ciarlo explained that the district has a shortfall of almost \$11 million. \$800,000 is only one piece of that. They still have the rest of it to deal with. They have looked at classes, looked at freezing spending even this year and until they finally got the money they needed of \$1.3 million; they have reduced teachers, they have a layoff of 65 people of which some will be returning, but they don't know how deep the cuts are going to be; and raising class size at the high school level. Mrs. Ciarlo further commented that Mr. Barone said the district continues to achieve; it is not going to remain that way if the district doesn't get adequate funding. This is just a small example of what will happen if they don't get it. If she had to worry only about \$800,000, she wouldn't be worrying. She is worrying about the other \$10 million. In the past, the mayors take the state aid and deduct that from the bottom line of what the school departments get. She asked where this district will get \$10 million. She knows that it has never been in the City of Cranston to be overly generous. She hasn't seen the state be overly generous; they just give the district more mandates. The squeeze is on, and it has been coming for the past three to five years. Now they are at a point when it is going to show. She feels very badly about that because Cranston does need to be there. They have built a good system with parents, teachers, and everyone else. Now they are going to let it go down so that it has to rise again some day. That would be terrible. Mr. Barone remarked that when the city was deliberating privatization of the animal shelter, crossing guards, and fleet maintenance, they did their due diligence; and after a lot of

research, they found that privatizing some of these services was not beneficial to the city; it would cost more to privatize. That is why the city still runs fleet maintenance and the animal shelter. He asked what other measures Mrs. Ciarlo had taken and had she researched any of the services to privatize. Mrs. Ciarlo said that they have researched the transportation which was done a couple of years ago. They asked for sample bids for out-of-district busing because that alone is almost \$1 million for non-public and special needs students. Now the state is talking about possibly taking that over. That would be

Page 23 February9, 2006

a big savings and help for the district. Next week she is going to see the Governor. Everyone should get together to tell the power brokers that they never give the districts enough money for doing a good job; they said they had a committee that said every community should get a 5% increase and those with a great deal of poverty should get 7%. She asked about the communities that continue to produce and provide information to the state. If Cranston received \$100,000 for every performing school, and there are nineteen of them, it would be nice. They should say the districts are doing a good job, and they should give them some incentives to continue to do it rather than this annual pool with the City Council and the Mayor. She pays taxes like everyone else, and she is a senior citizen. She would hate to see the good school system that she has known for some forty odd years go

down the hill because they were penny wise and pound foolish. The entire city's values will go down if the district can't keep it. Last year the City Council told the school department to look at closing schools, and now, unfortunately, when it happened in their backyard, they don't like it. She doesn't like it. Mr. Barone remarked that he didn't recall saying to the committee look at closing schools. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that he did not say it directly, but the City Council did. Mr. Barone did remember the City Council hearings, and he will pull the minutes for that one. He thought it would be a last resort. Mrs. Ciarlo added that the city administration has said it along with the audit report. Norwood Avenue School was a Blue Ribbon School, and was not only high performing but also it was recognized by the US Office of Education in Washington, DC. At that particular time, they were talking about Horton School. Cranston would be the laugh of the state. They come out to see Blue Ribbons, and it doesn't have the schools; they have been closed. Mr. Barone remarked that he would like to go with Mrs. Ciarlo to see the Governor. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that she would ask if he could go with her. Mr. Barone hoped that she would not have to close the school. Not only will it affect Horton but also the other two schools. They are taking away from the kids who are already there. Mr. Lupino stated that the City Council was very fair with the school department last year. They believed what the committee presented, and the Mayor at the time did not. It took some convincing, and the convincing was an unbiased third party that looked at the books, worked with Mr. Balducci, and said the district needed more than the \$1 million. The school

department welcomes that again. The committee is not presenting anything that they do not absolutely need. In fact, this budget as presented doesn't add any personnel, doesn't reduce any classrooms at all as far as size, doesn't bring in any of the programs they would like to bring in; it is just about funding some of the math programs they want to expand upon; and now the state says that the districts have to expand upon the program at the high school level because there are no more study halls. Mr. Barone commented that he liked the idea of the B & E audit because it is a third person giving an opinion; it is not a conflict of interest. It is an entity that does this as their expertise for a living. That is why all during the year he was against funding the additional \$1 million because the school department couldn't prove that they needed it. He felt the Council gave them what they were promised. When the audit came out, it

Page 24 February 9, 2006

was an opinion from a third party; and he is all for it. Mr. Lupino said that a lot of the budget is based on projections. It takes them into the year to know what some of those expenditures are going to be.

Vicky Wheeler, 171 Norwood Avenue – She stated that she does not have a child going to Horton; hers goes to Edgewood Highland. It is worth pointing out that 2006 is an election year, and a lot of these people are up for re-election. If there is something they want to get in

front of them, now is the time to do it. When they are up for re-election, they want to make everyone happy.

Randy Rosati, 14 Lockmere Road – He stated that he has a son in third grade and an alumni who is at Cranston High. He hadn't planned on speaking tonight but wanted to expand upon what Mrs. Adler said. As Robert Kennedy said, if you are not part of the solution, you are part of a problem. He told the committee that with their plan they seem to be following George Bush's mandate of No Child Left Behind. They are leaving no child left behind at Horton School, and he felt it was not a good plan at all. This will have an effect on three schools. They are targeting personnel. He thought he would come to this meeting and hear a logical explanation of the savings, the building, etc. They are keeping the building open with the same amount of money. They are targeting the best resources which is the personnel. The principal, teachers, and other school personnel are the best resources and can't quantify them with just the money that is on the blue sheet. That is a definite mistake. Horton is a neighborhood school, and that is the reason many people bought in the neighborhood and why they stay in the neighborhood. It should be a model for planning in Cranston to have more neighborhood schools like Horton as opposed to closing neighborhood schools. He knew that it was a financial decision, but sometimes people have to take a step back away from the spreadsheets and away from the numbers to see what they represent. They represent the people in this room, the people who couldn't

make it tonight, the students, and the parents of Horton School. Don't take it out on the school and the children and the staff to accomplish the same goal. Keep the children where they are.

Dana Borgia, 31 Calaman Road – She stated that her daughter is a second grader at Horton. She stated that every day she sees people growing apart. She sees people losing contact because of e-mail, voice mail, self-checkout lines, no one writes letters any more, people run everywhere, and no one knows their own neighbors. When she moved into Forest Hills, 1-1/2 years later her daughter went to Kindergarten. She didn't know anyone, and within one month, she knew the people in her neighborhood. All of the kids can re-adjust, and maybe it's her problem; but people start losing their community. Horton gives the kids community; it gives them security; it fosters relationships, and more importantly friendships. The people at Horton have made a lot of friends, and the kids have made a lot of friends.

Page 25 February 9, 2006

Mr. Archetto referred to the class size and the overflow, and he stated that they were dangerously high at Woodridge and Stadium in the fifth grade; at Woodridge in the third grade; and were not leaving any

room for people to move into the district. As an educator himself, a teacher at Bishop Hendricken High School and also at the Community College, he knows what it is to have a class of 28, 30 or 32 students. It is very difficult on the instructor. Anything over 25 is not easy for the pupil and the instructor. He also mentioned that he was in the General Assembly for six years, and it is nothing like this. The work that this committee does is just awe inspiring with the amount of work they put in and the people they help. The administrators are here until late in the evening, and they work on weekends. However, he recently looked at the budget and saw a line item for administrators' salaries. He may be mistaken, but there are raises in the budget for administrators' salaries. He couldn't justify that. He couldn't justify closing down a school and then in turn giving pay increases. He asked if there was such a line item. Mrs. Ciarlo asked Mr. Archetto where he looked in the budget. She stated that the committee settled with CASA, which is the administrators' group, and so there would be raises for them. The committee settled with CAMS which is the non-certified administrative group; and there were raises for them. Mr. Archetto responded that he was referring to the administrators' group. Mr. Archetto asked Mr. Stycos if he had the line item from the budget, and Mr. Stycos indicated it was on page 190. It is called administrative performance in the amount of \$21,522. Mrs. Ciarlo indicated to Mr. Archetto that he was talking about the people sitting up here and down there, and Mr. Archetto said she was correct. Mrs. Ciarlo emphatically stated that they work hard and deserve what everybody else gets. Just because they are here, they

shouldn't be the whipping boy as he is putting it forward. Mr. Archetto stated that he was not saying they don't deserve it; he was asking how on one hand could she justify shutting down a school and on the other hand giving a pay raise. Mrs. Ciarlo responded that if she thought \$21,000 could keep the school open.... Mr. Archetto stated that it was the principle of the matter, and everyone realizes that. He believed they had this same argument last year. Mrs. Ciarlo added that the administrators took a voluntary 10% cost share before it was mandated to do that. This should be taken into consideration too along with the number of hours worked.

Mr. Stycos stated that he is really distressed about these financial projections. As several of the speakers mentioned, when this was first put together it was \$800,000. Now it is down to \$481,000. Mr. Lupino interrupted and said his paper said the amount was \$742,831. Mr. Stycos said that he does have a paper that says \$742,000. He went on to say that the Horton savings consists of a principal's position, two classroom teachers, a secretary, and a custodian. Those are the savings from closing Horton. The reason they are talking about the reading teacher tonight is that the last time they met the administration made an error and miscalculated the number of classroom teachers that were going to be saved. They estimated three full classroom teachers, and there use to be four itinerants on the old list. On tonight's list, there are

three itinerants (music, physical education, art teacher), and that one itinerant has been moved up into the teachers to keep that at 3.5. The real number is in the \$400,000 range. Two years ago estimates were put together by Mr. Cofone of what it would save to close Horton. The estimate was \$310,000. To argue that they are going to save, using this sheet, \$172,000 on itinerants who go from classroom to classroom, by reducing two classrooms is just not accurate. The committee needs to look at what this is going to save which is really in the \$400,000 range. There is nothing listed about the cost of unemployment because when people get laid off they collect unemployment. The key issue has been emphasized by a number of the speakers, and that is preserving the neighborhood schools and keeping class size down. He can't support the closing of Horton at this time. It is a \$400,000 savings in a \$129 million budget. He will be working with Mr. Archetto to come up with a proposal to save that \$400,000 in a different way. He hoped that the committee will look at this for what it is. They are not saving on those itinerants because that should happen any way because the number of classes have been reduced. That whole line, that \$249,000, is not a savings, and he has real questions about cutting a reading teacher and a resource teacher. If they have to do that, they have to do that, but to say it is because they are closing Horton is just cutting services to the kids; and that should be acknowledged that this is what they want to do.

Mr. Traficante stated to Mr. Stycos that he didn't mind working with

him on any budget item, but they should be very realistic here. He has been through this many times. The committee will present to the City Council a budget asking for approximately an \$11 million increase. In his honest opinion from past experience, everyone knows this is an election year and that there won't be a tax increase. If the school department gets \$5 or \$6 million and that includes state aid, they will be very very fortunate. So, the committee's job is far bigger than the \$40,000. They should begin thinking a lot bigger than that because they have a massive job ahead of them fighting millions of dollars, not just tens of thousands of dollars. In response to Mr. Barone's question, Mr. Traficante said that if the school department gets the \$1.3 million proposed by the Mayor, that changes the base for next year; that lowers the percentage. Mr. Barone said the Council knew that it was going to be added to the base; it is state law that the base funding is based on the previous year. Mr. Traficante responded that when Councilwoman McFarland came before the committee she was absolutely correct. It was not going to be added to the base because the City Council was going to appropriate that money out of the surplus, so at that time it was going to be additional dollars. The committee knows that at the present time it will be added to their base which is a big help to them. They were hoping the state would come through with more than \$1.2 million or \$1.3 million state aid. That is a drop in the bucket, but that is what the district will get at the present time unless the state increases that amount. With the deficit they are facing, they didn't think it was going to happen. He was trying to be very realistic in looking at the big picture. This is not

just a Horton issue; it is a much bigger issue than Horton.

Page 27 February 9, 2006

Mrs. Greifer moved to adjourn the hearing.

A parent indicated that the committee was talking about putting portables in different school areas, and she asked what they would do with students at lunch time. Mr. Lupino asked who mentioned portables, and Mrs. Ciarlo said that they didn't mention getting any portables. They are not getting any portables; they don't have money in the budget for new portables or moving portables.

Mr. Traficante seconded the motion, and it was unanimously adopted to adjourn the hearing.

**There being no further business to come before the hearing, it was adjourned at
9:33 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

**Anthony J. Lupino
Clerk**